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State leaders award scholarship grants to 186 community groups

OLYMPIA – State leaders today recognized the accomplishments of 186 community organizations for their efforts to raise nearly \$2.9 million for local college scholarships. Each organization will receive a \$2,000 grant through the state Community Scholarship Matching Grant program, which can be distributed either to needy local students or placed in an endowment for future scholarships.

Paying for college is daunting for tens of thousands of Washington students, and without scholarships many would simply decide not to go, said Marc Gaspard, executive director of the state Higher Education Coordinating Board. “That’s why state efforts to encourage Rotary clubs, school groups and other organizations to raise money for local scholarships are so essential.”

To be eligible for the \$2,000 matching grant, organizations had to raise at least \$2,000 in new money for college scholarships. Most raised significantly more, with one high school scholarship fund in Gig Harbor raising more than \$100,000.

Gaspard praised the organizations for their commitment and creativity. “These groups worked tirelessly, from hosting spaghetti dinners and auctions to organizing jogathons and golf tournaments. One group even sponsored a duck race,” he said.

“Empowering local organizations and communities to raise money for local students is the essence of this initiative,” said Sen. Ken Jacobsen, D-Seattle, who has led the effort to secure state funding.

Calling it “one of the most cost-effective public-private partnerships in the state,” he noted that the Legislature earmarked \$502,000 in the 2001-2003 operating budget for the program.

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Jacobsen thanked Washington Dollars for Scholars, the nation's largest non-profit private scholarship and educational support organization, for helping nearly 30 community groups establish college scholarship programs this year.

Organizations interested in learning more about the Community Scholarship Matching Program should contact the Higher Education Coordinating Board at (360) 753-7861 or csmg@hecb.wa.gov.

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